

KEN SALAZAR
COLORADO



United States Senate

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20510 - 3903

March 8, 2006

Mr. Dale Bosworth
Chief, United States Forest Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-0003

Dear Chief Bosworth:

I have previously expressed my concern about the Forest Service's proposed sale of public lands. Even if this program were to be conducted with the best planning and greatest transparency, I question the wisdom of the current proposal to sell pieces of America's permanent heritage of public lands as part of a short-term budget issue.

Beyond my skepticism about the proposed sale of these lands, I am concerned by the manner in which the Forest Service is pursuing this program. On February 28, the Forest Service published a notice offering the public the opportunity to review and comment on the proposed sale of Forest Service lands, allowing the minimal period of thirty days for comments. However, the Forest Service has not given the public a fair chance to identify and study the affected parcels in order to comment.

As of this date, no maps of the affected lands are available in Forest Service district offices or even in Forest Service regional offices. Maps can be found on the Forest Service website, but, for many Coloradans, this is not meaningful public access. My own office can locate the maps and view them on the screen, but the maps will not print.

Although the Internet is a wonderful tool, for those who have high-speed access, far too many of Colorado's rural residents have no internet access or are limited to dial-up access. Trying to locate and download detailed maps can be somewhere between difficult and impossible for these residents.

I am especially concerned that many of the residents who live closest to the affected properties are unable to get the necessary information to identify what parcels would be up for sale. These are the people who know both the financial and the natural values of these lands better than anyone, and they will be the people most directly impacted by their sale. The Forest Service would benefit from their informed comment.

The current proposal to sell Forest Service lands to fund the current federal budget is a radical departure from our national commitment to protect the heritage of our public

lands. If this program is to be pursued, it should only be after the Forest Service has provided meaningful public education, convenient access to maps and other relevant information for all members of the public, and a reasonable amount of time for comment. Maps of the specific parcels to be sold should be available at every Forest Service office and at central locations in every affected county, including public libraries and public land record offices.

The relevant information should have been made available in a way that is convenient to the public, and this information should have been made available before the public comment period commenced.

I therefore request that the Forest Service withdraw the February 28 notice, take steps to ensure that the maps are broadly available, and then re-publish the notice to give the public the full 30-day notice period for review and comment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ken Salazar". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. The first name "Ken" is written with a large, prominent "K". The last name "Salazar" is written in a more compact, cursive script.

Ken Salazar
United States Senator